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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2019
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SUKHUMI RADIOACTIVE SOURCES.

REF: A. A. 09 TBILISI 121
[1](#)B. B. 09 STATE 3902
[1](#)C. C. 08 MOSCOW 3605
[1](#)D. D. 08 STATE 126999
[1](#)E. E. 08 TBILISI 2172

Classified By: Anita Friedt for Reasons 1.4 B and D.

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request for Embassy Tbilisi. Please see paragraph 7.

[1](#)2. (C) BACKGROUND: As outlined in Ref A, the Government of Georgia (GOG) sought from Embassy Tbilisi additional information concerning the removal of highly radioactive sources in Sukhumi, Abkhazia. The GOG asked for clarity on the following three questions: 1) guarantees provided by the Government of Russia (GOR) on the removal of high-level radioactive sources that had been located in Sukhumi, Abkhazia, 2) clarification on whether the GOR informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it had removed these sources, and, 3) assurances on whether the GOR had removed all the radioactive sources from the Sukhumi Institute of Physics and the Sukhumi Institute for Experimental Pathology or only the four high-level radioactive sources. The responses to these three questions are provided in detail below, along with a request to pass this information on to the GOG. END BACKGROUND.

[1](#)3. (C) In response to the GOG,s first question on guarantees provided by the GOR on the removal of high-level radioactive sources that had been located in Sukhumi, Abkhazia, we have received a written statement from the Russians following high-level discussions that all the radiation sources have been removed from the Sukhumi Physics and Technology Institute and the Experimental Pathology and Therapy Research Institute of the Abkhaz Academy of Sciences in August-September of 2008 (See Ref B). We have also received verbal confirmation from a senior GOR official that the sources have been removed to safe storage in Russia,s territory. (Note: The subject of the written statement may not be shared with Georgian officials).

[1](#)4. (C) In response to the GOG,s second question on whether the GOR informed the IAEA, Washington consulted with U.S. colleagues at UNVIE. IAEA representatives informed UNVIE personnel that in January 2009, Office of Nuclear Security Director, Anita Nilsson, met with two representatives from the Russian Mission in Vienna at their request. The Russian representatives told her that all of the sources in Abkhazia were moved in 2008 to Russia (no specifics on location). The Russian Mission also told her that two months prior (approximately November 2008), Russian representatives returned to the area and confirmed that the background radiation was back to normal. They did not give the IAEA anything in writing, and they did not indicate a specific date when the sources were removed, but they did state specifically that they were moved in 2008.

[1](#)5. (C) In response to the GOG,s third question, both the

Russian note to the United States and the Russian statement to the IAEA confirmed explicitly that all sources were removed, not just the four most highly radioactive sources previously noted.

¶6. (C) Washington is satisfied with this information and believes that it addresses U.S. concerns regarding these sources and their security. At this point, no further inquiries or actions regarding their security and location are required.

¶7. (S//REL GEORGIA) ACTION REQUEST FOR EMBASSY TBILISI: Per concerns expressed in Ref A, Washington requests that Embassy Tbilisi inform GOG interlocutors of this new information, using the points below:

Begin points:

--In response to your first question on assurances, we received guarantees from a high-level Russian official informing us that these sources have been removed. We also know from previous senior-level discussions with the Russians on this topic that they considered this a significant regional security risk, so we have no reason to doubt their credibility.

-- Additionally, the IAEA recently informed U.S. officials that representatives from the Russian Mission in Vienna informed the IAEA that the Government of Russia had removed all of the sources from Sukhumi to safe storage at an unspecified location in Russia.

--In response to your third question, the totality of the available information passed through these assurances confirms that all of the sources have been removed.

--We believe that this satisfies our mutual concerns regarding the location and security of these sources.

--The U.S. and Georgia have worked together to address many regional security issues, including nuclear smuggling, and we look forward to continuing this cooperation.

If pressed on GOR assurances to IAEA:

--We understand the Russian representatives to the IAEA did state specifically that the sources were moved in 2008.

End points.

¶8. (U) Department greatly appreciates Post,s assistance. Please slug responses for ISN/WMDT, EUR/PRA, EUR/RUS, and EUR/CARC.

¶9. (U) Department Point of Contact: Daniela Carcani (CarcaniD@state.gov), phone 202-736-4917.
CLINTON